

Acknowledgement of Priority

Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner acknowledge the Applicant's claim for priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 and receipt of priority documents. Applicant notes that priority documents were submitted on October 29, 2001.

Disposition of Claims

Claims 1-8 are pending in this application. Claim 1 is independent. The remaining claims depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 1.

Rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C § 102

Claims 1-4 and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,539,750 (Takagi). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Takagi is not valid prior art to this application. As evidenced by the attached declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131, the present invention was constructively reduced to practice prior to the effective 102(e) date of Takagi. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C § 103

Claims 5-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious over Takagi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,277,465 ("Watanabe"). Further, claim 7 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious over Takagi in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,660,061 ("Donley") These rejections are respectfully traversed.

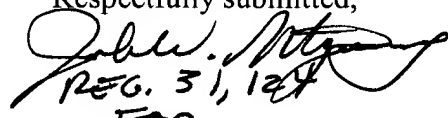
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declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131, the present invention was constructively reduced to practice prior to the effective 102(e) date of Takagi. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 04558.053001).

Date: 3-25-2004

Respectfully submitted,

REG. 31, 124
FOR

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